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LYSENKO, T (ROFIM) D (ENISOVICH)
September 29, 1898 - Agricultural Biologist

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The leading scientist and administrator in agriculture in the Soviet Union, T. D. Lysenko, is president of the Lenin All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences, Director of the Institute of Genetics of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, and Vice-President of the Supreme Soviet. As an exponent of the theory that environment rather than heredity determines the characteristics of organisms, the Russian biologist is regarded as a key figure in the Mitchurin-Mendel controversy in genetics, which has become an issue in the ideological conflict between the Soviet Union and the West. The theories in Lysenko's books Heredity and Its Variability and The Science of Biology Today predominate in the teaching of biology in his country.

The son of Denis Nikanorovich Lysenko, a peasant, Trofim Denisovich Lysenko was born in the Ukrainian town of Karlovka on September 29, 1898. When he had completed his studies at the Kiev Agricultural Institute in 1925, Lysenko joined the staff of the Ganjo (now Kirovabad) Experimental Station in the Caucasus, where he was engaged in agricultural research until 1928. On his father's farm in 1929 he conducted his first successful test in "vernalized" grain and soon afterward became known for "yarovization" or "vernalization," a process of moistening and refrigerating wheat grains whereby he claimed that he was able to impart the characteristics of winter wheat to spring wheat and to increase yields by 40 per cent. Lysenko, who has often been compared with Luther Burbank, has also been credited with developing a new method of pruning cotton plants and with evolving new varietie of cotton.

Since 1929 millions of acres of farm land in the Soviet Union have been planted with vernalized wheat. "Lysenko's method of applying scientific control to the germination stages of seeds" stated a writer in the New York Post (June 23, 1943), "has been reported to have produced as many as five crops of spring wheat a year, to have made semitropical crops bloom in the arctic cold of Siberia and the food crops of the north flourish in the hot and arid regions of Central Asia." Having thus seemed to solve the problem of recurring famines in Russia, he was widely acclaimed in his own country (outside the Soviet Union, plant breeders, using his method and data, were unable to duplicate his results.). He first gained attention of biologists in other countries through the efforts of Nikolai I. Vavilov, then Russia's leading geneticist, who in 1932 spoke favorably of Lysenko's work at the International Congress on Genetics at Cornell University in New York.

After the death in 1935 of Ivan V. Michurin, a Soviet geneticist who had criticized Vavilov's work because of what he regarded as its inadequate stress on environment, Lysenko came into prominence as a foremost adherent of the doctrine that characteristics acquired through environment can be inherited. Like Michurin, Lysenko denies the Mendel-Morgan theory, "which maintains," as Julian Huxley has expressed it, "that heredity depends on a system of material particles, the genes, hereditary variation on the mutation of genes, and evolution on the automatic process of natural selection." In denouncing this theory, which has been generally accepted since 1911 when the American biologist Thomas Hunt Morgan published the results of his researches on genes, Lysenko asserts that the gene does not exist, that changes in organisms result from differences in environment, and that these changes, or acquired characteristics, can be and are transmitted to succeeding generations. Thus he believes it possible to "disestablish" a plant's heredity and artificially introduce variations which will be passed on to its offspring by changing the surroundings in which it develops. He and his followers hold that by these means, they have "shattered the heredity" of tomatoes, wheat, barley, and potatoes.

Lysenko's views, which conform to Communist doctrine regarding the all-important role of environment in determining the basic characteristics of organisms, whether plants, animals, or human beings, won increasing official support. (Georgi M. Malenkov in particular has been mentioned as being impressed with Lysenko's work and theories.) In 1937 Lysenko was appointed a deputy to the Supreme Soviet and in that year also became director of the Institute of Selection and Genetics in Odessa. Meanwhile, in 1936, the Russian Communist Party organ, Under the Red Banner, sponsored a debate between Lysenko and Vavilov, and in 1939 at another public controversy Lysenko emerged as the victor. It was around this time, as related by H. J. Muller in the Saturday Review of Literature (December 4, 1948), that Lysenko was appointed

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President of the Lenin All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences and head of the Institute of Plant Production, positions previously held by Vavilov. In 1942 Lysenko was called upon to serve on the Soviet Commission on Nazi Crimes in Russia.

In the summer of 1948, from July 31 until August 7, the Lenin All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences presented a debate on genetics that drew international attention. As president of the Academy, Lysenko delivered the opening address, in which he restated his belief that the characteristics of organisms can be changed by experimentation and hybridization and again assailed the Mendel-Morgan laws of heredity as "an alien foreign bourgeois biology"; he also, stated the New York Times, attacked by name those Russian geneticists who adhered to and taught the Western theories. Several of these geneticists, including I.I. Shmalhausen, B. M. Zavadovsky, N. P. Dubinin, and A. R. Zhebrak, opposed him vigorously, Zavadovsky charging him with misrepresenting the views of those he attacked and with basing his own theories on insufficient experimental evidence. At the end of the debate Lysenko announced that his address had been approved by the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The academy then adopted a resolution, the New York Times further reported, "calling for the rewriting of university textboods and the revision of courses in biology and related sciences so as to remove all traces of foreign geneticists' views and to bring all teaching in conformance with the Lysenko-Michurin position." The following month (September 1948) on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday, Lysenko received the Order of Lenin in recognition of his contributions to agriculture.

The validity of Lysenko's views has been both supported and contradicted by experiments conducted in the United States. Professor Tracy M. Sonneborn,of Indiana University, stated in September 1948 that he had demonstrated that environmental factors can change the nature of single-celled organisms and that the changes are inherited (Newsweek, September 6, 1948). Experiments at Columbia University showed, according to William L. Laurence of the New York Times, "that certain microorganisms that appeared to have changed as a result of a changed environment actually had inherited those changes before the environment had been altered." Lysenko, who was awarded a first Stalin prize in April 1949 for his work in agrobiology, announced in December of that year that Soviet agronomists had succeeded in transforming wheat into rye by planting wheat in areas unsuitable to it. He credited that feat, which has been described as equivalent to changing a cat into a dog, to "Stalinist teaching on gradual, concealed, unnoticeable, quantitative changes that result in quick, qualitative, basic changes" (quoted by the New York Times, December 16, 1949).

An early book by Lysenko The Vernalization of Agricultural Plants, of which in 1943 over 1,300,000 copies had been printed, has been translated into sixteen languages and dialects. His Heredity and Its Variability, written in 1943, was translated into English in 1946; and his address before the Lenin Academy in July 1948 appeared in English in that same year as The Science of Biology Today. Lysenko's teachings were said by Muller in 1948 to be "widely disseminated" in the Soviet zone of Germany and his Heredity and Its Variability to be distributed in a Spanish translation in South American countries. In a despatch to Commonweal in May 1952 Gunnar K. Kumlien reported: "Lysenko's theories on heredity form a large part of Communist cultural propaganda in Italy today.... In many countires in Europe where the Communists are strong tthe Lysenko propaganda is increasing intensively." Besides occupying the posts mentioned, Lysenko is Vice-President of the Supreme Soviet, Deputy Chairman of the Council of the Union of the Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R. , a member of the praesidium of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, and Director of four agricultural research stations. He holds, in addition to the awards cited, the title of Hero of Socialist Labor.

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THE HISTORY OF THE CPSU
by Junius

/An article in two parts translated from "SF" the weekly journal of the Danish Socialistisk Folkeparti (Socialist People's Party, i.e. Revisionist Party), Copenhagen./

No. 20
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pages 6-7

The history of the communist party in the USSR is an incredible story of will power and merciless fights, of human devotion and humiliation, unity and strife, vengefulness and goodness, greatness and pettiness - of fanatically fighting men of good will and less good will and about their wise, cowardly, courageous and stupid actions. But first and last it is the story of the greatest human achievement in the history of centuries. Here is a group of people - first a small flock, then more and finally millions - who find the fulcrum from which all things are moved, and in the course of half a century they alter their world totally and irrevocably.

However one may stand on the subject of their means and goals, one must recognize the greatness of their undertaking and achievement.

The History of Two Giants

What history could be written about these people! All other history books will seem poor, if the real history of the communist party of the Soviet Union were written. And what would it not mean to all those who strive to change their world in the same direction as the Russian communists - in socialistic direction?

Some day that history will probably also be written. As far as the time up to the beginning of the 30's is concerned, there are several important historical accounts, but for the time after 1936 we are in the desert.

"The History of the CPSU, a Brief Survey", written by Stalin, is not the history of the Soviet communists. It is the history of a mystical concept, "the party" which never is in error, incessantly purges itself of rottenness and goes from victory to victory. Aside from two figures - Lenin and Stalin - the people in it are accorded only a secondary role: "the party decided", it says, what does it matter which people it is who make the decisions, when one knows that they make them with Lenin and Stalin at their head?

Mainly the party is described only in the persons of these two "giants": at intervals there occurs, however, a list of the Leninist core which regardless of the historical situation turns out to be persons long dead and persons who, at the time of publication, were close to the author (in the 1938 edition Yezhov belongs to the "Leninist core" of the civil war: in the 1946 edition his role does not appear to be worth mentioning).

Stalin's book about the CPSU is the plainest modern example of "applied history writing". Its purpose is not to describe the course of history and to learn from it, but (1) to praise the communist party as infallible (2) to make Stalin one with it and (3) to smear all his opponents. On the other hand, the book is silent about all the "errors" which all those, who at the time of writing closed ranks around Stalin, had committed during the years.

On the 20th congress of the party this presentation was strongly critized - for what can present-day youth learn from a "historical analysis" which explains all defeats by referring to enemy agents disguised as leading communists, and all victories as results of the omniscience of a few geniuses?

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After four years a new edition of the CPSU history has been published, written by a committee with Ponomarev, who is ideologically close to Stalin, at the head, but not - like Stalin's book - officially authorized by the Central Committee.

One clings to the hope that is contained in the last mentioned circumstance.

From Stalin to Khrushchev

It may appear strange to squander so much space on Stalin's old book about party history, when it is the new that is to be treated. There are two reasons for this: (1) only by comparison with the old presentation can one evaluate the ideological progress: "From Stalin to Khrushchev"; (2) the objections in principle against the old presentation are also valid for the new: its purpose - to strengthen the authority of the current party leadership - is just as dominant.

In the new presentation the party is not the work of two men, but of one - Lenin. Various random recitations of Lenin's adherents do not change this significantly. After Lenin's death more emphasis is given to the Stalin group as a unit. A novelty is the inclusion of the names of all those who belonged to the group - in other words, those Stalin adherents who went "soft" and therefore were liquidated by Stalin: Kossior, Rudzutak "and others".

These two little words, "and others," play the same part as in the old edition. By their use, direct lies are avoided when situations are to be described where opposition men, who were later executed, supported Lenin or Stalin - a state of affairs often occurring, which is to be hushed up.

Approaches Towards the Truth

Most of the direct lies and the crudest cover-ups have disappeared. It is reported clearly that Lenin was in the minority during the peace negotiations with Germany. But often the truth slips out in a peculiar form: the attentive readers actually learns that Trotsky was the chief of the Red Army - but it is mentioned only in connection with a criticism of it. It is the same with the once famous "troika" - Stalin, Zinoviev, Kamenev - who fought Trotsky in the period 1920-25: they are mentioned in a subordinate clause, when Zinoviev and Kamenov broke with Stalin. The Stalin-Bukharin coalition which arose thereby is mentioned for the first time when Stalin broke with Bukharin. All of it in subordinate clauses. This is also a way of writing history - one can imagine Denmark's modern political history written in the same way.

Nevertheless, this cautious tribute to truth is a great step forward from Stalin's book. But one will look in vain for a clear view of the membership of the Central Committee and the Politbureau at various times. It was the party, personified by Lenin and the Central Committee - specifically disregarding Zinoviev, Kamenev and Trotsky - that carried out the October Revolution - and not a group consisting of (in addition to those already mentioned): Stalin, Sverdlov, Nogin, Uritsky, Kollontai, Artiom, Dzorzhinsky, Siaumian, Berzin, Rykov, Bukharin, Joffe, Sololnikov, Smilga, Bubnov, Muralov. This presentation is also more practical, as the "party" later thanked the seven last-mentioned, plus the three opponents referred to, in a very special way.

No More Trotskyite Vermin!

In one respect the new presentation constitutes important progress. The use of language has been completely changed: The "Trotskyite vermin", "dregs of humanity" and many other tidbits have disappeared. In a few places there are some "surrenderers" left, and in one place Trotskyism is referred to as a "counter-revolutionary menshevik" movement. Deviations are referred to by the words "against the party" and "erroneous" (the former is worse than the latter). In the entire book there is only one "enemy of the people" namely Beria, who is not even elevated to "foreign agent", only "political adventurer".

The changed form of expression is not accidental. The reader is at the same time given a reasonably objective report of the arguments of the opposition, each time followed by critical remarks. But in by far the greater number of cases

it is lack of political judgment for which the authors berate the opposition, and not directly evil intentions. The manifold opposition movements are not looked upon as paid foreign agencies, but as Menshevik movements - i.e. adherents of that wing of the Russian social democracy which regarded it as impossible to build socialism in a backward country like Russia.

That means that they are looked upon as what they were, namely politicians, not criminals. This is the most genuine improvement from Stalin's textbook. But how about the trials? About this in a later article.

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PART II

One will naturally search with special interest through the new edition of the party history of CPSU for new factual information and a new evaluation with regard to the tragic chapter of the big trials of the 30's against Stalin's political opponents in the communist party. What new material does the book bring here?

As a rule, one should expect that trials where prominent leaders admit having been despicable spies ever since the founding of the state would be regarded as very important source material, and be included even in the briefest presentation. Can one take the liberty of hushing up such important material?

Stalin, at least, did not think so. In his book (the 1938 edition has 472 pages, large type) about ten pages are used to report the disclosures from these trials. The Ponomarev committee must have been of a different opinion - for in its presentation, the section of which up to 1938 covers 500 closely printed pages, there are zero lines about the big trials.

Paradoxically one feels encouraged by this breach of the most elementary rules of history writing. Surely it impairs the clarity - innumerable persons, frequently mentioned, disappear suddenly without trace from the story, those who do not know better may believe that they have settled down in social security pensions. But a healthy sense of shame is evident through the silence.

The False Theory of the Trials

Indirectly the trials are mentioned in one single place: it is said that Stalin put forth an "erroneous" theory of sharpening the class struggle. "In practice it served as the justification of punitive measures on a large scale against the politically beaten ideological opponents of the party. Also many honest communists and people outside the party who were entirely innocent were exposed to punitive measures". Then the responsibility is laid on Yezhov and Beria, who "exploited the personal shortcomings of J. V. Stalin".

The two sentences quoted (and that is actually all that is said about the mass purges) are written in a somewhat befuddled way. Were the "ideological opponents" not "entirely innocent"? The author apparently does not consider them to be "honest communists", but on the other hand it is said that they were sacrifices to an erroneous theory - and therefore not to justice!

This presentation does not contribute any evidence of clarification in the article of Stalin-followers: it rather increases the process of confusion.

As far as we are concerned, we do not make great demands. We regard it as a significant step forward that it is admitted that a number of the founders of the Soviet state were not German and Japanese spies (as it is said in Stalin's presentation). If one thought so, one would surely have used at least one line in the 744 pages to mention it...

A Tame Evaluation of Stalin

The treatment of Stalin is lenient in form and sharp in content, where it follows the criticism already known. The form is most interesting. It is quickly surveyed: seven pages plus a few subordinate clauses here and there in connection with corrections of the "errors".

Three Lines About the "Leningrad Affair".

Is it right to gather all that is negative in a historical period in two small parapraphs, the last of which, furthermore, one does not come across until long after one has finished the period in question? Hundreds of pages are used to describe how well everything is going, and then suddenly some brief, concentrated remarks that it was not at all as well as one just thought.

An example: In 1948-51 the Soviet was shaken by a violent inside party fight which was fought in the deepest secrecy. It took the form of incrimination of Malenkov's political opponents, was named the "Leningrad affair", and cost the lives of, among others, the party leader in Leningrad, the premier of the RSFSR, two Central Committee secretaries and a member of the Politbureau. Does not mention of the "Leningrad affair" belong in the description of the period 1945-53 (chapter 16)? Could it have failed to put its stamp on this period?

One reads through the chapter in vain. All was going very well. More than 30 pages further, in the chapter concerning the period 1953-58 we find in the section "Errors and defects produced by the person worship [cult of the individual] are corrected" three lines about the "Leningrad affair". It must not be permitted to disturb the general positive picture given of the period 1945-53.

In this way it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to derive a proper lesson from history. It is probably also for that reason that one can read through the conclusions at the end without finding any resume concerning the "person worship". Is the "person worship" not a danger, like "revisionism" and other deviations?

When one studies the concrete decisions of the Central Committee during the last six years, one receives a clear impression that it is. But here in this presentation, theory and practice must always be kept apart. In practice one can make corrections (and one does), but the theory must be kept "pure". It must not be infected - by reality.

More Factual About Opponents

Finally, a very great improvement must be pointed out. While the "anti-party" group liquidated in 1936-39 are still treated in historically incorrect manner, and Beria (certainly correctly) alone is called "enemy of the people", those politicians who after the 20th congress have been given the label "anti-party" are at least treated in a way that is historically correct.'

This is quite interesting, because the words one has heard about them during the last three years have not all been friendly. Nevertheless, Molotov is mentioned in all cases where he has played an important - and from the authors' viewpoint - positive role. The same is true of Bulganin, and under the list of the great military leaders of the War, Zhukov is included.

If only the whole book had been written in that way, much could have been forgiven. It would not have meant that the authors - and the party leadership - would have had to relinquish a criticism of the principles of the various opposition standpoints, from Trotsky to Molotov, but it would undoubtedly have meant that the myth of the "unified party" and the "Leninist core" would have gone by the board. Therefore, if the book should still be effective as propaganda for the party leadership, much greater demands would have been made to the authors' reasoning ability. Already the deliberately limited criticism of Stalin shakes the dogma of infallibility and of unanimity; imagine a similarly tuned-down evaluation extended to include all the prominent personalities in the history of the party!

The result would, in return, be such that the socialist movement, both inside and outside the Soviet Union, could draw practical usefulness from the book, regardless of whether or not one agreed with the evaluations and critical remarks of the authors.

- As the matter now stands, the book is historically considered an expression of an important step forward compared to Stalin's book, so important that one can

be sure that the great decisive step also will be made, even in a foreseeable future.

Heavy, Colorless Reading

As a historical presentation the book is important by its comprehensiveness, but in many respects it is useless because it falsifies or distorts the historical sequence - which may be evident from the examples brought out here.

As historical reading it is deadly depressing - the chapter on the last war, the horrors and heroism of which are great enough to surmount even the most pedestrian narrative, is a worthy exception. In contrast to Stalin's book, which had the sole advantage of being readable, it is ponderously written (and obviously translated from a German draft: what for example is "foresonerisk"?) It will therefore not be much read and not spread much confusion. But on the other hand, it is not authorized by the Central Committee. We are waiting for another edition.

Because the book about the history of the communist party of the Soviet Union is still to come.